

I AM NAVY MEDICINE: ROGER SMITH

Story by Douglas Stutz

"I am Roger B. Smith, retired Navy chief petty officer and staff member working at Navy Medicine Readiness Training Command (NMRTC) Bremerton.



In a Navy career – active duty and civilian federal service spanning approximately four decades – service before self is the norm for Mr. Roger B. Smith. As Navy Medicine Readiness Training Command Bremerton's Information Management Department clinical system liaison and informatics engineer, Smith uses his extensive computer knowledge, electronic skill, and information system technician ability to continuously support command clinicians with connectivity issues and concerns when needed (official Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz, NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer).

Smith, born in La Puente, raised in West Covina, California, and 1980 graduate from Covina High School, is NMRTC Bremerton's clinical system liaison and informatics engineer. He's also, amongst other duties, handled such computer-based responsibilities as systems engineer, storage area networking engineer, picture archiving and communication system (PACS) administrator, and medical program manager.

He's a 1990 Southern Illinois University Carbondale Distance Education alumnus with a Bachelor of Science in Vocational Education.

"I have also attended several other colleges as time goes on working on a Masters in Astrophysics," said Smith. "I've always been interested in astronomy, computers and Science Technology Engineering (and) Mathematics (STEM) programs well before STEM was the term."

“In high school I had the opportunity to work with an early punch card fed computer,” continued Smith. “This gave me a basic understanding of computer programming languages. I’d hoped to continue this in the Navy as a data systems technician and was a bit let down when that rate disbanded, However, I found that being a radioman on submarines was all about electronics and computers.”

Although Smith has been at NMRTC Bremerton for approximately 20 years providing computer-based Information Technology support to – and for – doctors, nurses, and hospital corpsmen, there was an initial possibility he might become part of the medical field.

It was during an early tour assigned to the submarine USS Grayback as an undesignated Navy diver, that he managed to get assigned working for the submarine’s independent duty corpsman (IDC) and diving medical technician. That provided him an initial, hands-on opportunity in Navy Medicine which he then felt would be his chosen career path.

“Until I found out that once I went off to hospital corpsman school, my future would be with the Marines as a corpsman until I could become an independent duty corpsman and come back (assigned to a submarine). After all the work to get assigned to submarines and qualified in something I truly loved, I chose not to continue working to become a corpsman and sought another career path,” recalled Smith.

From 1998 to 2000, then-Chief Information Systems Technician Smith, with enlisted warfare designations Surface Warfare Specialist, Submarine Warfare Specialist and Diver, was originally assigned to Naval Hospital Bremerton. He filled the position of Fleet Hospital 5 Bremerton Communicator and Information Management Department (IMD) leading chief petty officer. After retiring in September, 2000, he returned in 2002 as IMD clinical liaison to medical systems where he has been working continuously for the last 18 years.

Smith’s Navy career – active duty and civil service – has spanned four decades, beginning in 1980 as a young, enlisted, advanced electronics data systems technician `designated for submarine duty.

His curriculum vitae from his submariner career features a host of stringent qualifications earned, senior enlisted rates and rank achieved including chief radioman, chief electronics technician, and chief cryptologic technician maintenance, and a host of additional, specific highly-technical education acquired, from advanced communications and cryptographic training to electronics curriculum developer and analog and digital systems training,

Bringing his computer knowledge, electronic skill, and information system technician ability to Navy Medicine was a seamless fit, for Smith as well as the command.

“Over my career the opportunities to learn and grow kept everything fresh and challenging. During my last year as an instructor at submarine school I managed to grab an open seat in the Naval Hospital Groton emergency medical technician certification short course. The corpsmen I worked with rekindled my desire to be involved with medicine in one form or another. Once I transferred to the surface side of the submarine community I filled my collateral time by becoming a CPR instructor. With my teaching background that went to becoming an American Heart Association Basic Life Support instructor trainer,” explained Smith.

The Navy has taken Smith across the U.S. and many locales across the vast expanse of the western Pacific and Indian Ocean(s), including then U.S. Naval Base Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines; Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Agana, Guam; Guguan, Saipan, and Tinian islands of the Northern Mariana Islands; Sasebo, Yokosuka, and Yokohama, Japan; Pusan and Chinhae, South Korea; Hong Kong, Thailand, Brisbane and Sydney, Australia, Diego Garcia, the Caroline Islands chain, and the Cook Island Chain.

He has crossed the equator to been initiated as a Shellback and has also traversed the Arctic Circle to become a certified Bluenose. Highlights all, but none more so than experiencing many with his wife.

“I married my high school girl friend in 1983 and have travelled to many remote locations with her by my side,” added Smith.

When asked what has been the best part of his career in the Navy and working at NMRTC Bremerton, Smith replied, “This hasn’t been a solo journey. Working with various military and civilians in our IT area has been rewarding to see how their careers have advanced from working here.”

“Working at NMTRC Bremerton has allowed me the privilege of continuing to work with professionals in the medical field,” added Smith. “Over the years, our medical staff have continuously taken the time to let me see behind the curtains of their work, so that information technology might have a clearer perspective on the impact of information technology systems to patient care. The work is constantly evolving and challenging. This keeps it from ever becoming routine or boring which has me learning something new and exciting every day.”

With the Navy surgeon general priority on operational readiness and NMRTC Bremerton’s core mission of producing force medical readiness and medical force readiness, Smith’s expertise continues to provide support towards such needs.

“IT is an integral part of the Navy medical mission. From electronic health records to integrating the data captured by patient monitors or lab equipment, the underlying connection is IT. Our Information Management Department is constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of the medical mission, to

protect the network and patient data from cyber-attacks, and support the daily needs of our medical staff,” stated Smith.

Smith summed up his experience with Navy Medicine at NMRTC Bremerton by saying, “I am daily amazed at the professionalism, care, and desire to do the best and be the best that our medical staff strive for. It’s a privilege to work with, and support them, in their daily operations.”